

City of Pittsburgh Ordinance for Recycling in Public Places

The City of Pittsburgh knows that its citizens want to recycle wherever they are, whether at home, at work, or out and about. With the goal of doubling the amount of recyclables the city collects in 2007, city officials revved up efforts to promote recycling at special events, including at Pittsburgh Steelers and University of Pittsburgh football games. In addition to working closely with event planners and various sports organizations, the city credits local regulations and guidelines for helping to make recycling at special events a success.

The Bottom Line

- An ordinance that includes requirements for recycling at special events is worthwhile because it helps pull materials out of the waste stream that would otherwise end up in a landfill.
- Writing recycling requirements into event permits ensures that event coordinators are aware that recycling is the law.
- A cooperative relationship with the city's event permit review committee helps the recycling office identify the city's approved events and provide recycling resources to them.



These collapsible recycling bins are on loan from the City of Pittsburgh to capture beverage containers in a festival vending area.

Program Overview

The City of Pittsburgh has made recycling at special events a key component of its overall recycling program, using a combination carrot-and-stick approach to ensure success. Back in 1990, the city adopted the state's guidelines for establishing a municipal recycling program and passed a local ordinance that requires separation of white office paper, corrugated cardboard, plastic containers, and aluminum cans from the trash generated during community activities. These materials are to be stored until they are collected for recycling. The city can assess fines up to \$1,000 plus court costs for an initial violation and up to \$5,000 plus court costs for each additional violation.



The Bottom Line

- Offering assistance, including bins, helps build relationships between the recycling office and event coordinators, reinforcing the recycling message.

Facts at a Glance

- Pennsylvania's [Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling, and Waste Reduction Act](#)¹ (Act 101) requires municipalities to establish a recycling program that includes an ordinance for persons to separate white office paper, aluminum, corrugated cardboard, leaf waste, and other materials deemed appropriate at community activities.
- Pittsburgh's [City Code 619.05](#)² requires persons to separate white office paper, corrugated cardboard, plastic containers, and aluminum from municipal waste at community activities. (See section (c) commercial, institutional, and municipal establishments and community activities.)
- Pittsburgh's [Special Events Recycling Guidelines](#)³ reiterate the recycling requirements and offer to provide recycling containers and a small trailer for major events as well as collection of the materials after the event is over.



The City of Pittsburgh loans this small trailer to event organizers to help them recycle during their programs.

Second, city officials developed guidelines for special events that are expected to draw more than 200 individuals per day. The guidelines reference the local ordinance and its requirements but also offer recycling assistance, such as providing recycling containers and small trailers for major events. The city has about 100 containers available for loan, and when not in use, stores them in a small warehouse next to the recycling office.

In addition, the city offers to make arrangements for collecting the materials after the event, but event organizers are responsible for providing volunteers or staff for proper maintenance and supervision of the containers during the event. Event organizers must follow the procedures outlined in the city's guidelines for proper handling of collected recyclables. Depending on the size of the event, the city may use two 9-cubic-yard trailers and/or rear-loading dumpsters available in a few sizes. Sometimes the trailers will need to be emptied multiple times during an event that runs for several days.

“Having an ordinance is a necessary tool to help pull materials out of the waste stream. We work with event planners and strive to ensure that our citizens have a recycling option at all community events.”

Shawn Wigle,
City of Pittsburgh's Acting Recycling Coordinator

Outreach and Education

With a firm regulatory foundation in place, the city uses several avenues to spread the word about the recycling requirements for special events. First, city officials posted the city code on their [Web site](#)⁴. Second, they required event planners to have a solid waste plan that includes recycling as a condition for receiving an event permit. Finally, the review committee for an event permit now includes a representative from the Pittsburgh Public Works Department who can further explain the recycling requirements to the event coordinator as necessary.

An event's solid waste plan is subject to approval by the city's special events committee. "By the end of the permit process," says Shawn Wigle, acting recycling coordinator for the City of Pittsburgh, "the event coordinators should be well aware that they have to recycle." Once the city issues the permit, the event coordinator typically contacts the recycling office for assistance.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Each year, several hundred events may be going on, making it difficult for the city's three-person staff to keep track of the events and provide resources for them.

Solution: The city's permitting office sends copies of permit applications and a list of approved events to the recycling office. The recycling office usually focuses its resources on the largest events and those that it has worked with before. The recycling office usually supports around 100 events per year.

Challenge: Limited staff makes it difficult to enforce the recycling requirements.

Solution: The city makes promoting recycling and building relationships the focus of its special events recycling program. By working directly with event coordinators by phone, e-mail, and attendance at the events themselves, city officials report that many event coordinators now automatically e-mail or call the recycling office to ask for help.

Challenge: Offering recycling bins that work can be a challenge.

Solution: The city experimented with a variety of bins, including large totes and trailers. Currently the city is using ClearStream® bins with clear plastic bags. The city reports that these bins work well in most situations because they are easy to store and transport, come with a see-through recycling bag, and have lids with restricted openings.

Recycling and waste bins were placed side by side at the 2006 Major League Baseball All-Star Game to make it easy for attendees to recycle. EPA's *Recycle on the Go* assisted with recycling at this event.



Close-up of half-full recycling bins at an event.

Facts at a Glance

- Special event signs ask event attendees to look for the blue recycling containers and recycle all of their plastic, glass, and aluminum beverage containers. The signs are available from the city's recycling office.

Information

For more information, contact the City of Pittsburgh's Public Works Recycling Division at (412) 255-2631 or visit EPA's *Recycle on the Go* Web site at www.epa.gov/recycleonthego.



Endnotes

- ¹ www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/airwaste/wm/recycle/document/ACT101.doc
- ² www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/pw/assets/05_Ordinances_Chapter_619_entire.pdf
- ³ www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/pw/assets/Special_Events_Recycling_Brochure.pdf
- ⁴ www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/pw/html/special_event_recycling.html

Recycling poster for Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix.

All photographs courtesy of the City of Pittsburgh's Public Works Recycling Division.



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